

discussing efforts at reforming the welfare system in this country, and it is clearly the goal of both the Republicans and the Democrats to make sure that people move from welfare into the American economic system and that those individuals move into that economic system in the hopes of achieving economic self-sufficiency. It is clearly what the President has announced as he has discussed welfare reform and as he has discussed the minimum wage.

The minimum wage becomes key to that effort of moving people from welfare, from public assistance, from dependency, to economic self-sufficiency. We must make it clear that in this country those individuals that choose to go to work, those individuals that later we will seek to require to go to work, that they are making a logical economic choice for them and for their families.

The key to doing that is making sure that the minimum wage will boost people above the poverty level in this country; that when they make a decision to get up every morning and go to work and go to work all day long, that in fact when they come home to their families and their children, they will know they succeeded in lifting their family out of poverty. If we do not do that it is very difficult to rationalize to those individuals why in fact they should go to work.

The \$4.25 minimum wage that we have today does not do that for individuals, and it clearly does not do that for individuals who are working on behalf of themselves and their families.

What we see today is more children under the age of 6 are living in poverty than at any time in recent history, and 58 percent of those children are living in families where individuals go to work every day. They go to work on a part-time or full-time basis but they do not receive, they do not receive wages sufficient to keep their family above the poverty line.

We have got to make sure that that no longer is true. And that is why the increase in the minimum wage is so terribly important. Clearly, work must pay, and that is the signal that we must send in this country; that you go to work, it is worth your while to go to work to do that job and to provide for your family. That simply is not true.

The increase in the minimum wage that the President has asked us to support, 45 cents this year and 45 cents next year, will raise an individual above the poverty line. It unfortunately still does not address an individual that is working on behalf of a spouse and/or children in that family. But we have got to make that effort. This is the minimum that we can do on the minimum wage.

Historically, the increase in the minimum wage has had very, very substantial bipartisan support. When we addressed this exact same increase, 45 cents one year and 45 cents the next year, when it was presented to us by President Bush it was passed over-

whelmingly on a partisan basis; 383 Members in this House voted for it, 135 Democrats voted for it, crystallizing again that President Bush had the same goal that President Clinton did, and that is to make work pay, to get people to go to work and to be able to provide for their families.

I think it is unfortunate that we now see the Republican majority leader say to this country that he will oppose the minimum wage with every fiber in his body, that he will deny these individuals who are seeking to provide for their family the ability to go to work and come home above the poverty line.

I think it is unfortunate when we see the people of this House suggest that we cannot raise the minimum wage because we have to compete with wages in Mexico. I think we should have told the people of this country that that was the conditions on the passing of NAFTA, and that now Americans' wages are going to be tied to the wages of Mexico.

Is that the message we have for people that go to work in this country every day, that you can live at the standard of living provided people in Mexico? That simply cannot be.

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That simply cannot be. That cannot be the underpinnings of the American system of economics. It cannot be the underpinning of the free enterprise system, and it cannot be the underpinning for support for families in this country.

We have got to understand that Americans who go to work are entitled to participate in the American standard of living on behalf of themselves and for their families.

I am delighted to see that apparently the support for the minimum wage is not complete across the Republican spectrum, because this weekend we found out Senator DOLE is not opposed to it. The question is only what we will have to pay to achieve the minimum wage, and the indications are that if you cut the capital gains tax, where 75 percent of the benefit goes to 10 percent of the population, then and only then are the Republicans prepared to try to help the millions of American families who go to work every day yet remain in poverty.

BAILOUT OF MEXICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NUSSLE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, article I of the U.S. Constitution vests the power of the purse in the Congress. Unfortunately, the President of the United States has taken it upon himself to do an end run around the Constitution, the Congress, and the American people to bail out Mexico.

Mr. Clinton has pushed the barriers past the breaking point. He is basing

his power grab on a twisted reading of his authority under the Gold Reserve Act of 1934. That is the law which established the Exchange Stabilization Fund that Mr. Clinton has raided to save Mexico.

The Exchange Stabilization Fund was not meant for the kind of shenanigans that Mr. Clinton is trying to pull. It was designed to ensure that we would have an orderly and stable system of exchange rates.

In other words, the Gold Reserve Act gives the President authority to stabilize the U.S. dollar and protect its value. It does not give the President the authority to prop up the currency of Mexico.

It seems that Mr. Clinton needs to take a refresher course in constitutional law. Only Congress has the authority to appropriate money.

Apparently, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, doesn't think too much of Mr. Clinton's bailout scheme either.

The Washington Times reported on February 1 that the Exchange Stabilization Fund, the IMF and the BIS do not have the resources to deal with Mexico's problems. He went on to say that the bailout should be addressed by the political leaders of the country because of its broad implications.

Mr. Greenspan is not alone in thinking that this financing scheme is a multibillion-dollar disaster waiting to happen.

The Hertigage Foundation had warned that this bailout was a bad deal as early as January 25. A study by Hertigage warned,

The proposed loan guarantees may bail out Mexico this year, but they will not prevent another crisis unless the Mexican Government corrects the fundamental structural problems that caused the peso's collapse.

Our financial partners in Europe seem to understand the problem. When it came to a vote at the International Monetary Fund, Germany, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland all abstained from voting rather than support Mr. Clinton's plan.

I applaud my colleague, Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi, for pushing the envelope on this issue by introducing a privileged resolution that will put the House on record as to where we stand on this bailout.

His resolution will put us on track to determine whether the President has acted outside the scope of his authority.

We have all sworn to defend the Constitution of the United States. If the President is wrongly seizing power from the legislative branch, it is our duty to stop him.

Mr. TAYLOR's privileged resolution is just the thing to start the inquiry into what I believe may be the power grab of our time. Congress, not the President or the Courts, is charged with the power to spend the money.

We cannot sit on our hands and watch the President shred the Constitution and ignore the will of the Representatives of the American people. We must let everyone know that this body looks out for the interests of the American people, not the Government of Mexico.

CALCULATION OF CONSUMER PRICE INDEX SHOULD BE OUTSIDE POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I am a Member of the House who has felt that the calculation of the Consumer Price Index for our country should be a concern that was outside politics, one that was going to be nonpartisan. Making sure that the Consumer Price Index is calculated accurately is of enormous importance to, for example, low-income senior citizens who depend on their Social Security to pay for their necessities, but it is also important to millions of middle-income taxpayers, because our brackets are now indexed for inflation, and the tax brackets and the personal exemption, the standard deduction. A number of these concerns for middle-income people are affected by the Consumer Price Index.

But recently it seems to me politics has been introduced to these discussions, because the Speaker has said that unless the Consumer Price Index is changed within the next 30 days, the agency that calculates it, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, would be zeroed out.

I think this is very unfortunate. We understand why someone might want to do this, because if you lower the Consumer Price Index, you can have a no-fingerprints way to cut the deficit by about \$150 billion, if you cut the Consumer Price Index by just 1 percentage point. But what you will do in the process is hurt those low-income seniors and, ironically, there are some new studies by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that show because of the high medical expenses of seniors their Consumer Price Index may be understated rather than overstated. So you will hurt those seniors.

But you will also hurt the middle-income taxpayers who will find they will be paying more in taxes as a result of these changes.

Now, I am one of the Democrats who voted on the first day of the session to make it tough to raise income taxes, because I thought it was important to protect small businesses and seniors and others. So last Friday, with the minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT], and a number of our colleagues, I introduced a piece of legislation stipulating that to cut the Consumer Price Index in this Congress and raise the taxes on middle-

income people and hurt low-income senior citizens you would have to comply with rule XXI that was passed the first day saying that a tax increase has got to be approved by a three-fifths majority. I am very hopeful that this bill will not be necessary.

I want that Consumer Price Index calculated on nonpartisan bases by professional economists, but if there is going to be an effort to politicize the Consumer Price Index, it will come out on the floor of the House of Representatives and cutting it and hurting the senior citizens and the middle-income taxpayers, for those who want to do it, they will have to comply with the rule making it tougher to raise income taxes.

SUPERFUND LIABILITY MORATORIUM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. CANADY] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer an avenue of relief to small businesses and individuals throughout the country who have done nothing wrong, but are nonetheless being held liable for the expensive task of Superfund site clean up.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Congress passed the Superfund law in 1980 to clean up the country's most polluted waste sites. The merits of the Superfund effort are without question. Superfund sites are environmental disaster areas which have a clear potential for impact on public health and safety. Superfund sites must be cleaned up.

But while the Superfund law may have a noble purpose, the details are a nightmare. The framers of Superfund, adhering to the concept of "polluter pays," created a scheme of joint and several and retroactive liability. This wrongheaded provision has forced many individuals and small businesses to pay a portion of the clean up costs although they are not in fact responsible for the pollution.

Mr. Speaker, this structure has resulted in a notorious tangle of litigation and enforcement, and it has wreaked havoc on the lives of innocent citizens while accomplishing very little in the way of actual clean up.

These innocent individuals had no knowledge of the release of hazardous substances into the environment. They were simply trying to do the right thing by contracting with a third party for proper disposal. Now they are liable, under Superfund, for the cleanup of environmental disasters they did not create.

Such liability without culpability is patently unfair. It runs contrary to common sense and the fundamental requirements of justice. Further, it can be financially devastating to innocent individuals who are caught in the Superfund trap.

There is general agreement, in this body and elsewhere, that the Superfund liability structure must be changed. I am aware that the appropriate committees and subcommittees in both Houses of Congress are working on a comprehensive reform effort. I support this effort.

However, as Congress debates the shape and scope of reform, individuals in my district and elsewhere continue to be pursued and persecuted for something they did not do. This is not right, Mr. Speaker. We must stop this injustice and prevent this law from further disrupting the lives of innocent individuals.

It is for this reason that I introduced H.R. 795 last week to provide relief for innocent parties while we proceed with comprehensive reform of the law. My bill instructs the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] to cease all agency actions against the nonpolluters. It also places a moratorium on the authority for contribution actions under the statute.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, to explain what my bill does not do. It does not abolish the Superfund Program, it does not repeal Superfund funding authority and it does not stop the clean up of Superfund sites. It allows the EPA to continue its enforcement actions against the true polluters—the culpable owners and operators of the contaminated sites and all others who had prior knowledge of illegal or environmentally harmful disposal activities.

H.R. 795 simply suspends the practice of financing Superfund clean ups on the backs of innocent people who had no knowledge of wrongdoing and no intent to harm the environment.

This legislation is needed to provide relief to the innocent individuals caught in the Superfund liability trap. The Superfund nightmare has gone on far too long. We should stop the injustice without further delay. I encourage my colleagues to join me in this effort.

THE LINE-ITEM VETO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 1995, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. DEFAZIO], is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today we have before the House the issue of the line-item veto, or did we really have a viable form of the line-item veto pending before this House? This could be a useful tool in the armamentarium of a President who is truly concerned about reducing the budget, a President who just does not want to use it in a political or punitive manner to go after a few programs, that he or she in the future could not convince the Congress to otherwise not fund.

But the question is, is this a viable form, or is it a grandly symbolic gesture, a gesture intended for the 84th birthday of ex-President Ronald